



Envision Arlington Standing Committee

Date: November 13, 2019
Time: 7:30 - 9:00 PM
Location: Town Hall Annex, 1st floor meeting room

Minutes

Attendees: Juli Brazile, Sue Doctrow, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Greg Christiana, Kelly Lynema
Visitor: Don Seltzer

1. Introductions

Juli opened the meeting asking for people in their introductions to share what they have been thinking about this week as they were thinking about Envision Arlington and this meeting.

- Juli shared that she has been wondering if we're trying to do too much. Need to prioritize.
- Greg said he was focused on precinct meetings and more generally about what the trajectory of the town looks like re: civic engagement and how Envision Arlington can support.
- Kelly said she had been focused on the 2020 Town Survey and how to increase response rates through additional outreach. Also thinking about governance and researching voting rates in peer communities.
- Sue reported feeling guilt over not holding a precinct meeting this fall, and that she is curious about how precinct meetings have been going. She has also has been thinking about the issue of the historic districts commission preventing solar panels and heat pumps and how that conflicts with the town's goals of energy independence.
- Don said he thinks the precinct meetings have been a great idea. His precinct had theirs on Sunday, and it was very productive, despite struggling to get people to attend. He said they have been an opportunity for people who are unhappy about something to vent about it and get the temperature in the room on how their neighbors feel about the same issue. He said he attended tonight's meeting because the housing group was on the agenda.
- Elisabeth has been thinking broadly about precinct meetings, town day outreach around housing and governance, thinking that maybe we shouldn't be thinking of ourselves as a committee that facilitates other committees that will last forever, but maybe our real vocation is being there for whatever is coming. She suggested that Envision Arlington could make community connections through projects, like an incubator space for new projects and ideas in town.

2. Approve September minutes

Minutes were approved as written.

3. Town Day debrief

This agenda item was a mistake – the group discussed doing t-shirts for 2020 Town Day.

4. Discussion: possible formation of a task group or working group on housing

Juli said she doesn't have an update for this agenda item. Don asked what the group would be doing and if it would be duplicating the functions of any other committees in town. Juli said we would not want to be duplicating efforts, and that we have high level questions on

the survey to get an understanding of what a task group would focus on. No real decisions have been made.

Greg asked how much of our goal with the housing group would be to cover technical aspects. Juli clarified that the group would focus on public engagement, not on warrant articles. The first task that has been addressed is having conversations around the topic.

Kelly noted that there will be a joint Select Board and ARB meeting, and that specific plans around engagement should be oriented around working with leadership, and should avoid circumventing town processes. Juli suggested that our best role might be to identify what people want and feed that back to those boards.

Don said he has attended past engagement meetings, but was not satisfied with the level of engagement allowed at those meetings. He said there should have been a free question and answers period at the end, and not formatted like an ARB meeting. Elisabeth said that any engagement around housing needs a different approach, to find a way to establish confidence in the solutions that are being presented.

5. Discussion: Survey 2020 topics

The topic areas with questions on the Town Survey were discussed. Juli has passed a draft of all questions by several volunteers with expertise in survey drafting. A few suggestions were made by the group regarding editing the questions:

- Add an “already have” option for the housing sustainability questions and prioritize options that renters could do.
- Add 45-54 year olds as an option in the demographic questions.
- Provide additional variety to the “whom do you live with?” questions.
- Expand options under the “current place of residence” question to include public housing and subsidized housing.

Juli said she would be sharing a survey monkey draft and asked the group to take the survey several times so that we can review for errors, address problem areas, and test the responses for IP addresses and other variables.

Kelly suggested that the business community should be alerted to the questions on plastic waste, so they are aware that there may be policy changes coming as a result of future Town Meetings.

The group will explore ways to add a separate page after the survey is submitted to ask for volunteers and keep those responses separate from survey responses.

6. Discussion: goals for the year

Juli said that we have an opportunity to host a True Story Theater event, but doesn't know if we could get enough people to come. The group discussed what themes could be explored at a True Story Theater event and considered housing and relationships with the police department. Kelly suggested that these are sensitive issues that the town already has processes in place about, and that before considering these as topics Envision Arlington should check in with affected departments to ask about the appropriateness of the topic and timing of an event. Juli said she will talk to Christopher and Ann and say we're interested but can't wrap our heads around how it would work, and she would touch base with a few town departments to see if timing is right.

Regarding the Town Survey, we will issue a press release in December to raise awareness of the survey, share survey topics, and educate people on the differences in this year's survey. Juli is interested in getting more volunteers to help with outreach, such as physically getting some fliers in local shops in January or having flyers with tear-off tags with the

survey URL or a QR code. Our goal is to keep increasing survey response rates year over year.

Juli said she has been working on a document for the Task Groups outlining on policies and procedures, which she can distribute to group for review.

A document outlining the Envision Arlington Framework for the Next Ten Years was shared. Juli worked with the Town Manager to outline a process for relabeling the Town Goals to Community Values and clean up flaws in the statements. She outlined the proposed process for updating the values statements over time.

Elizabeth thinks this is the right approach. There is value in presenting these in the year 2020 to Town Meeting. The proposed process shows respect to the original document, which is important to many people who worked on it.

7. New Business

Len Diggins joined the meeting to talk about governance and upcoming precinct meetings. Pat Hanlon had asked if it would be possible to do a news story and generate a little publicity about what happens in the meetings. Len said he could do this in video format, outlining: what people missed at precinct meetings this fall, noting the annual schedule for precinct meetings, and discussing what's coming up at spring precinct meetings.

Members of the group discussed topics that were discussed at their local precinct meetings. In general, it seemed that there may have been too little time for discussion. Juli recommended that TMMs provide a five minute overview of how town government works and then allow people to ask questions about what's important to them or what they wanted to know more about.

Juli and Len want to plan a governance with town meeting members to talk about how meetings went and schedule meetings for April. Planning ahead for spring, it would be good to get the board reports out sooner. Dianne Mahon said if there are priority articles, they could try to respond to those sooner. Len suggested that if the timeline could be moved up so warrant closes out at the end of the year, moving up the time for hearings and give more time for public review, then reports could be issued sooner – before the election – and precinct meetings could be scheduled earlier.

Juli wants to get a few more people to work with Len and a couple other people on a governance committee to really push these things: organizing candidate statements for town meeting races, hosted on league of women voter's site; working with the clerk's office to build introductory forms so when candidates apply they know they should submit a candidate statement.

Juli needs volunteers to run candidate night and new TMM orientation. She asked if it would be possible for IT to create an email alias for all TMMs, but the consensus was probably not.

In other new business, Elisabeth asked about Envision Arlington writing a letter supporting CPA funding for the Open Space Plan. As part of the final application they need letters of community support. All members present voted in support of the letter, authorizing Juli to sign on behalf of the committee.

Juli shared a list of things that Envision Arlington has to do and does on an annual basis. The group will decide on these items in the December 11 meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20pm.